The Paradoxes of Cyclotourism: constructing and consuming nature

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Peter Cox
Faculty of Social Science
University of Chester
Peter.cox@chester.ac.uk

Abstract

As an archetypal form of low carbon footprint travel, bicycle tourism appears on the surface to be an ideal candidate for sustainable tourism. Taking a longer historical view, however, one begins to become aware of complex paradoxes emerging from cyclotourist practices.

Examination of cyclotourists' own writings shows how nature and the natural have been successively constructed as an object of discourse. Two themes are of especial interest in this study. First, a discourse of wilderness and otherness is apparent as a key theme reinvented in differing forms by successive generations of riders and writers. Second, there is a parallel discourse of domestication at work in which nature and the natural become tamed and part of the human. Although apparently contradictory, these two themes are deeply intertwined in the literature: the cyclotourist is simultaneously both apart from the landscape and yet belongs in it. Further, the relationship between rider and the spaces ridden has had consequences in terms of the built environment as cyclists pioneered road improvements, transforming the object of their narrative.

The paper draws principally on archival material from The Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) in the UK (founded 1878) to explore changing constructions of, and attitudes toward, 'nature'. It chronicles changing attitudes and it analyses the production and reproduction of discourses and maps their transformation through the 20th century. In conclusion it also points to the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in contemporary cyclotourist practices as these have become much more closely enmeshed in the fossil fuel economy through changes in modes of activity.

Introduction

Merely a decade after Michaux's pedal driven velocipede appeared on the streets of Paris, letters were being circulated in a variety of media in England advertising for a forthcoming meeting to form a bicyclists' "Touring Club".[1] Practices of tourism and the guided tour were well established in Britain by this time, with Thomas Cook's tours first organised in 1841 and the Guide Books by John Murray having gone through multiple editions alongside the perhaps better known Baedecker guides first published in 1838.[2] This meeting resulted in the formation of the Bicycle Touring Club, which, by July 1880 boasted 2629 members. It produced its own guides, maps and road route recommendations alongside a monthly bulletin, changing its name to the Cyclists' touring Club in 1883 to reflect the growing popularity of tricycle use. The formal organisation of a social club for touring therefore predates the constriction of the first commercial safety bicycle by about a decade.

From the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century onwards, therefore, the bicycle became a recognised means by which the tourist gaze could be extended. These early cyclotourists were rarely likely to be novice travellers: the bicycle remained an exclusive item out of reach of all but the affluent for almost all of the late nineteenth century. In class terms therefore they were fully part of that expanding group of bourgeois travellers whose practices and journeys have largely set the ground for tourism histories.[3] Yet the very practice of cycling crosses boundaries between tourism and leisure, the special practice of the planned and extended 'tour' and the more mundane outing. Once the safety bicycle had arrived and production became more industrialised, so too was cycling to open up all sorts of activities to a greater range of social classes as ownership became more diffuse and diverse thorough. It is important to not here that this process which may be considered a form of 'democratisation of the bicycle', took distinctly different course according to the prevailing social-political conditions and relative strengths of class-based organisation in different nations. Nevertheless, a strong current in many accounts of the rise of socialist bicycle clubs (e.g The Clarion in the UK, the ABC in Denmark or the German Workers'cycling associations) is the desire of those active in them to appropriate the benefits of outings to the countryside from the bourgeoisie and make them available for a much broader class of participant.

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[1] William Oakley, *Winged Wheel: The history of the first hundred years of the Cyclists' Touring Club* Godalming: Cyclists' Touring Club, 1977

[2] See e.g. Rudy Koshar "'What ought to be seen': Tourists' Guidebooks and national identities in Modern Germany and Europe"

[3] Towner's comments (John Towner, "What is Tourisms's History?" Tourism management 16(5) 1995, 335-343) are still pertinent here, especially in relation to the expanding links with a newly emergent crossover into leisure.

Given the centrality of the idea of access to the 'countryside', whether in later democratised forms of cycle-tourism in the 20th century, or in the nineteenth century bourgeois definition of cycling as sport – as in 'country sports and pastimes' – the field of cycle tourism is an appropriate site in which to examine the way in which this idea of country and landscape has been constructed. This paper examines this construction through a selection of narratives, both verbal and visual, created and circulated by participants themselves. It draws from actor narratives in the English- speaking world and seeks to give an overview across more than one hundred years to demonstrate the continuity of themes within the literature.

Defining Cyclotourism

Tourism studies have opened a number of perspectives in which to understand and interpret contemporary and historical tourism. Cohen (1972) creates a typology of tourism, distinguishing between institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms, and within these categories, between mass and individual tourism in the former group, and between the explorer and the drifter in the latter. Cyclotourism as will be seen crosses over between these categories and is not clearly defined by any of them, although they all reveal aspects of its experience. Importantly for consideration here, Cohen's 'explorer' category, although non-institutionalised, is defined by its detached gaze of the classic tourist, contrasted with the immersion of the drifter in the experience of the unfamiliar. This latter may be likened to some aspects of the pre-1914 wandervogel: as a voyage of self-discovery.

Analysed through the work of John Urry (1995, 2002), the phenomenon of mass tourism has created the economic conditions for the construction of deliberate tourist destinations, whether as resort destinations or of cultural spectacles created and maintained as visitor attractions – a role adopted by many contemporary museums. In turn this has raised the theoretical problem of the idea of authenticity and the remaking of cultural and historical artefacts, which in turn results in analysis of the tourist gaze: the inter-relationship between observer and observed in defamiliarised contexts In itself this depends on the initial observation that "tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary" (Urry 2002: 12).

For the purposes of this discussion, the cyclotourist is defined as a person who makes a journey by bicycle for the express purpose of leisure, and whose choice of the bicycle as the means of mobility is elective, not forced by necessity. That is, the tourist experience of the cyclotourist could not be made by substituting any other form of locomotion or transport. The experiences imparted by the act of cycling are understood as integral to the journeying. The journey itself is inseparable from the destination.

Moreover, the term cyclotourist is adopted, rather than simply using the term cycle tourist, to indicate the primary reliance on the cycle as a mode of transport, not a subsidiary activity taking place within a wider tourist/leisure framework – for example, a leisure ride taken by bicycle at a destination point to which the rider has driven by car.

Immediately, we can make two observations in relation to the primary defining characteristics of tourism. First, cyclotourism, whilst historically and popularly identified with non-institutionalised tourism practices, is not necessarily confined to them. A survey of advertisements in the *CTC Gazette* (monthly journal of the Cyclists Touring Club) in the 1950s and 1960s and its successor *Cycle Touring* through to the 1980s reveals an almost complete lack of commercial cycle touring packages. However, there is a clear expectation that cyclotourism is not limited to individual initiative, but it may be equally accomplished through the conventions of club membership and participation in group tourist rides. Such practices constitute an ambivalent area between the institutionalised and noninsitutionalised conventions and between mass and individual tourism.

Further, since the mid-1990s, an increasing number of organised cycling package holidays are advertised and sold. These were first in the form of organised holidays led by CTC members (advertised in supplements to the CTC members' magazines), and latterly by commercial companies organising ventures (and commercially advertised). Similar patterns are visible in other areas of cycling. Since the mid-1990s racing cyclists have increasingly taken up cycling packages to ride stages of the grand tours and other similar events, although these fall outside of our working definition of cyclotourism. However, any discussion of cyclotourism must be aware of this broader dimension, as well as the classic image of the lone or small group cyclists pedalling independently where the fancy takes her/him/them. Indeed, also since the middle of the 1990s, CTC has consciously repositioned itself as more of a campaigning organisation and its identification with the club scene and with cyclotourism scene has been progressively diminished. Instead, the activities falling under this description of cyclotourism are to be found narrated in the pages of *Arrivée*, the members' journal of Audax UK which bills itself as 'The Long Distance Cyclists' Association'.

The second important observation concerning the cyclotourist is that there is a degree of ambivalence in the extent to which the binary division between the mundane and the extraordinary, as identified by Urry above, can be upheld. Although there are significant exceptions, one may make the general observation that those who select cyclotourism over any other mode of tourism will have some regular experience of cycling in an everyday situation. Cyclotourism, for the bulk of its participants therefore, transposes a mundane and familiar activity into a novel space. Although the binary between the 'ordinary/everyday and

the extraordinary' may be upheld, the boundary between the two is rendered porous, because of the importance of the experience of travelling and the integrity of the cycling to the tourist experience.

John Urry's (2002) exploration of the tourist gaze points out that there is no single 'tourist gaze but that it varies by society, social group and historical period. This analysis is consciously limited to an exploration of those within an English speaking language community, and within the particular history of cyclotourism originating in the UK. Other cultural constructions of cycle tourism will have their own parallel narratives, sites of intersection and areas of difference which deserve investigation. The description takes a trans-historical approach to demonstrate the remarkable level of historical continuity apparent in these cycle travellers' accounts of their activity

This investigation is, therefore, culturally specific but of necessity relates to the wider context in which cycling is framed in any given location. The cyclotourist, by definition is one who has moved beyond their immediate and familiar locale. But as Urry makes clear, the gazer implies a gazee, and therefore experience is a two way production, a dialogue even if one party is the landscape or cultural object. It makes sense therefore, to start consideration by framing the cylist as a voyeur.

The Cyclotourist as Voyeur

Whilst cycle histories conventionally assume the bicycle as a means of transport, Nicholas Oddy (1993) forcefully argues that throughout the nineteenth century, the bicycle is principally a plaything. To have undertaken journeys by bicycle during this period thus owes little to the rational adoption of an efficient means of non-substitutable method of transport, but to the deliberate statement of an act of wilful leisure. That the exploits and adventures of long journeys are reported from this period, and that the principal touring associations were founded prior to the bicycle becoming a widely used object of transport, emphasises the ludic quality of the bicycle. As defined, cyclotourism continues to constitute this ludic dimension of cycling.

The advent of the high bicycle, with its much higher gearing (greater development) resulting in greater distance travelled per pedal stroke and the increased comfort of the tension spoked wheel, brought about the capacity for practical travel over longer distances than had previously been viable. The safety bicycle (1885 onwards) and the pneumatic tyre (commercially produced from 1890) significantly opened further the opportunities and the practice of cyclotourism. Consequently the era of the high bicycle provides the first accounts of cycling as a leisure activity away from the immediate domestic surroundings of urban

parks and cycling rinks that provided much of the landscape of velocipede use.[4] Thomas Stevens epic Aro*und the World on a Bicycle* (1887) recounting his three year journey typifies the new possibilities.

Clubs such as the CTC in the UK and the numerous local clubs in the USA were formed with the express intention of creating a touring culture, and this is reflected in the accounts from their members. "A Summer Ramble among the Black Hills" by William Owen of the Laramie Bicycle Club (1883: 87) typifies these narratives. A lyrical reflection on a day's outing, it delights in the landscape and the sense of "gentle, easy exertion, which exhilarates rather than fatigues".

As in many other similar descriptions of cycling in the pages of the *Wheelman* and of *Outing*, the language of tourist gaze is hammered out:

From the point of intersection of the road and creek may be had a magnificent view of the cañon for a quarter of a mile in either direction. All around us could he seen most graceful outlines and rugged forms, bold, perpendicular cliffs, pyramids, cones, and pinnacles. Far above, from apparently bare, smooth walls of granite, gnarled and stunted pines and cedars jutted out without any visible signs of support, or of any earth from which to obtain their nourishment. (Owen 1883: 82)

The act of observation is reiterated throughout the account: "It was certainly a superb sight,"; "to our right we saw Eagle Bluff"; "Pilot Knob, which is visible for miles from any direction"; and "Looking north or south the eye met nothing but the Black Hills". The language of the tourist is that of voyeur, of landscape experienced through the gaze and made newly accessible by the bicycle. Parallel examples can be found in numerous other accounts, for example in John S. Phillips' *A-Wheeling In Norambega* (1884) whose imagery is entirely visual, "these are but hints for a picture, which it would be difficult to draw with words", or emphasised by the naming of destination spots such as 'the Bellevue' (Getzé 1886).

The language of these accounts reflects a growing romanticisation of the landscape shared with other growing outdoor pursuits in the late nineteenth century, such as climbing (see Westaway 2004). If Wordsworthian romanticism in relation to landscape is clear in these largely bourgeois explorations of the rural and the less well-trodden uplands in the UK (Urry 1995), what of other influences? There is also a current of transcendentalism evident in these narratives, the landscape having itself an agentic quality – a capacity to transform the

[4] This is not to deny the very real sense of journeying that the velocipede had allowed. Even Von Drais' Laufsmachine and its successors had been used for inter- urban travel, but these mahcines cannot be said to have provided a real basis for tourism per se.

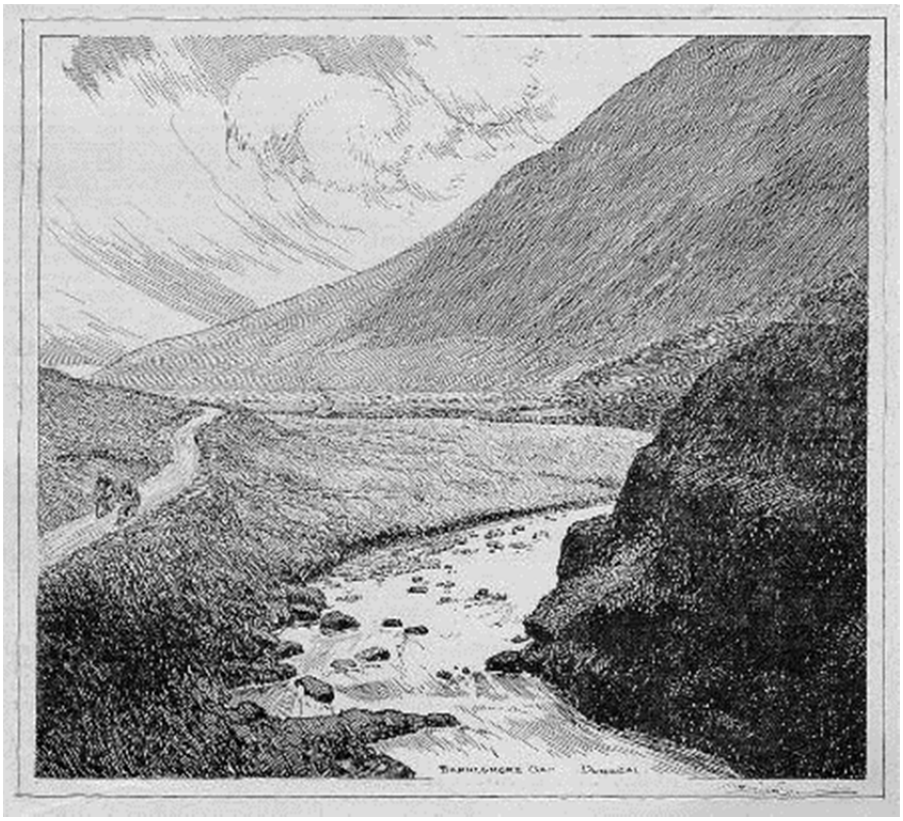
senses of the observer. The cyclotourist is an observer, a voyeur, but the claim appears to be implied that the voyeur does not remain unmoved by the vision.

John Foster Fraser's *Round the World on a Wheel, Being the narrative of a Bicycle Ride of Nineteen Thousand Two Hundred and Thirty-Seven miles though Seventeen Countries and across Three Continents by John Foster Fraser, S. Edward Lunn and F. H. Lowe* was published in serial form in The Strand magazine during the 1890s, and in book form in 1899. It set the tone for a range of travel writing by cyclists for a wider public than the inward looking clubman's scene. Throughout Fraser's writing there is a constant theme of strangeness, of alienation from the distinctive 'otherness' of those amongst whom he and his companions travel. Every landscape, every person is a new and strange spectacle to be gazed upon and measured against the expectations and values of the Englishman. Here is the world displayed as an education in the ways of strangers and the search for moments of recognition. These nineteenth century accounts describe a new and unfamiliar world opened up by the bicycle, and in which the bicycle, as Norcliffe (2001) demonstrates, is a harbinger of modernity. This provides a distinct contrast with narratives of a century later in which the cycle appears an anachronistic mode of mobility, yet one which enables a different perspective on the world because of its 'otherness' to the motor car.

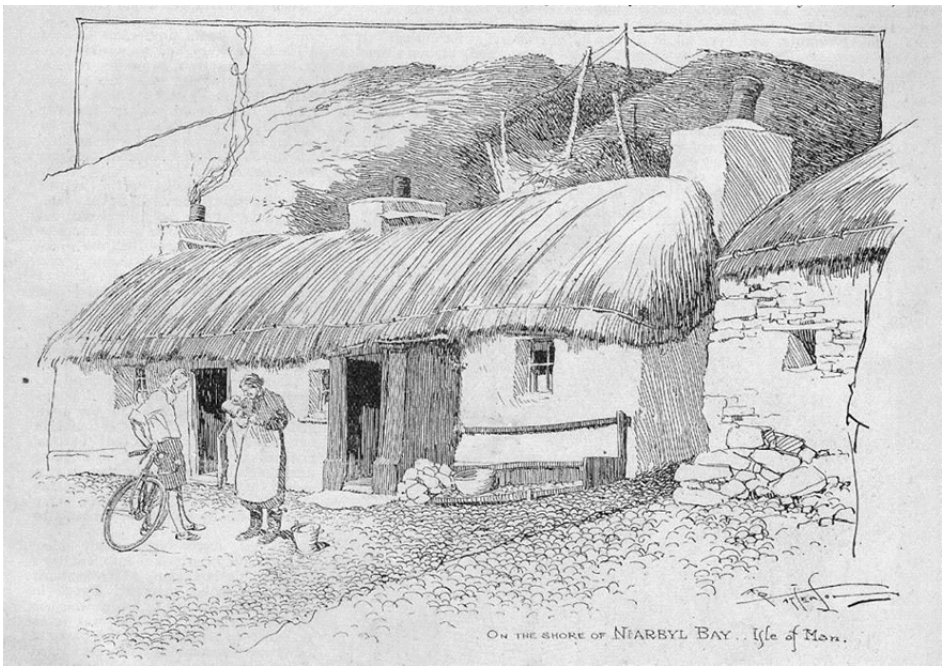
Framing the natural: illustrating landscape

The bicycle tourist as voyeur *par excellence* is maintained throughout subsequent cycling literature. A scattering of examples should suffice. In the contents of the *CTC Gazette* (vol 4 No 57) of April 1938, we find articles on landscape drawing, seasonal nature notes to familiarise the rider with migrating birds, and the regular "Notes of a Nomad" by Frank J Urry, urging the rider to take time to see the country around as he or she cycles through. These articles are, of course, in addition to the news, rides and technical articles one might expect to find. The cycle tourist is encouraged to be the observer, not merely an onlooker but one who learns to appreciate the world made available through travel. Moreover, in the use of illustrations in the pages of the *Gazette*, a very particular set of images is created.

A significant factor in the construction of the self-image of the British cyclist in the twentieth century is due to the prolific contribution made by Frank Patterson. Patterson (1871-1952) was employed as an illustrator by both the *Gazette* and by *Cycling*, the newsstand magazine covering cycling, both touring and racing (note that for complex reasons cycle road racing was prohibited by the NCU - National Cyclists' Union, encouraging the growth of club cycling and the time trial). For these two journals, over the course of 59 years from 1893 until his death in 1952, he produced some 26,000 illustrations (Moore 1991) commencing his work in *Cycling* in the 1890s and in the *Gazette* from 1926. After his death, the illustrations continued to be used in the Gazette until it changed to colour print in the 1980s. Other illustrators also drew stylistically on his work.

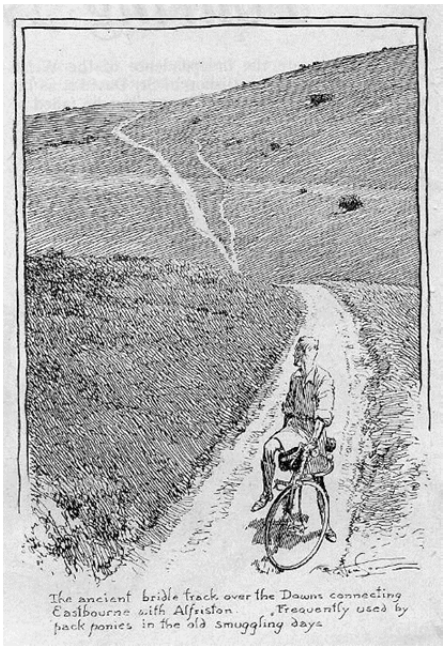


Because of their number and their subsequent - almost constant - reprinting and re-use, Patterson's landscape sketches have almost come to define the cyclist in the UK landscape. Frequently in Patterson's landscape views, the cyclist is rendered peripheral, a marginal observer, the gaze falling on the landscape and less often on its inhabitants. Where local inhabitants of the landscapes are present, they are frequently rustic caricatures, the picturesque peasantry of a bygone pastoral. A rural and nostalgic tone pervades his work, a very definite statement even when concerned with the racing, rather than the touring, cyclist.



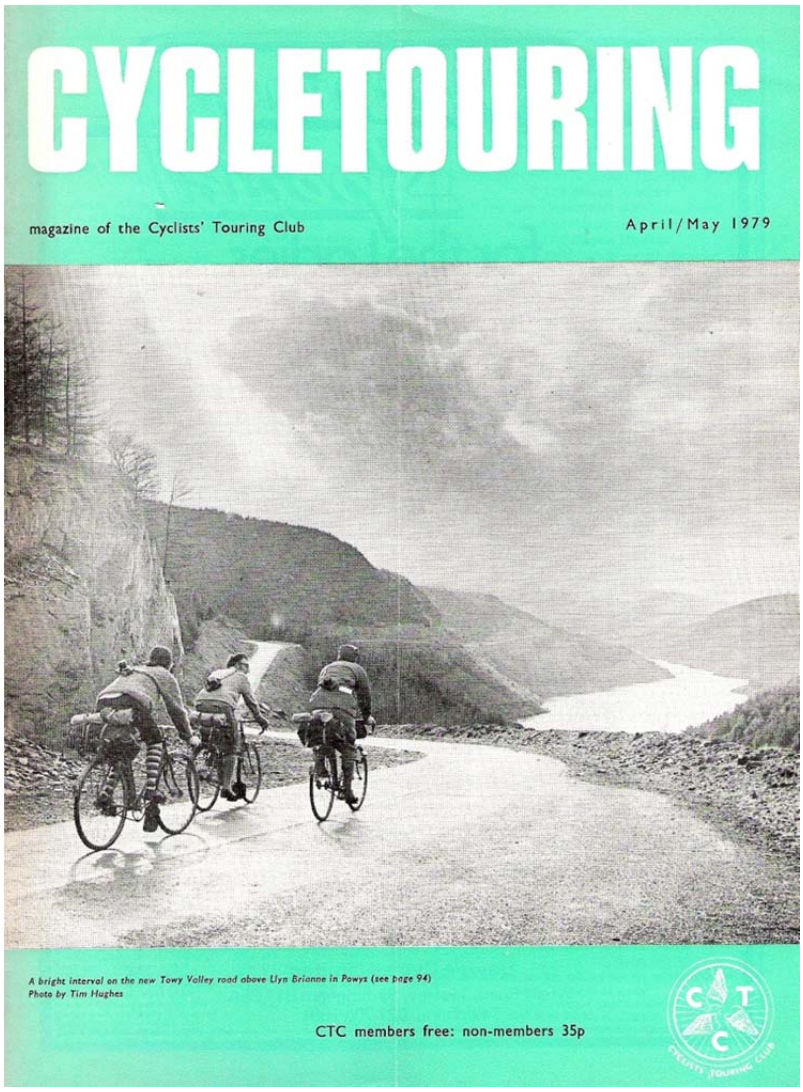
Similarly, in touring accounts of the period, clear assumptions are made about the urban readership – the cyclists – and the rural strangeness of the subjects of the viewer's gaze. Local inhabitants are described and depicted with an almost colonial 'otherness'. Describing Staithes on the Yorkshire coast, Wright (1961: 76-77) observes:

"Wedged tightly between towering cliffs, Staithes is a pace of character, quite unlike anything we had seen so far. The winding street down the hill divides into two narrow alley-ways to get round the curiously named 'Cod and Crabfish' before emerging on to the waterfront, where the old women still wear their traditional caps and aprons as they sit chatting in the evening."



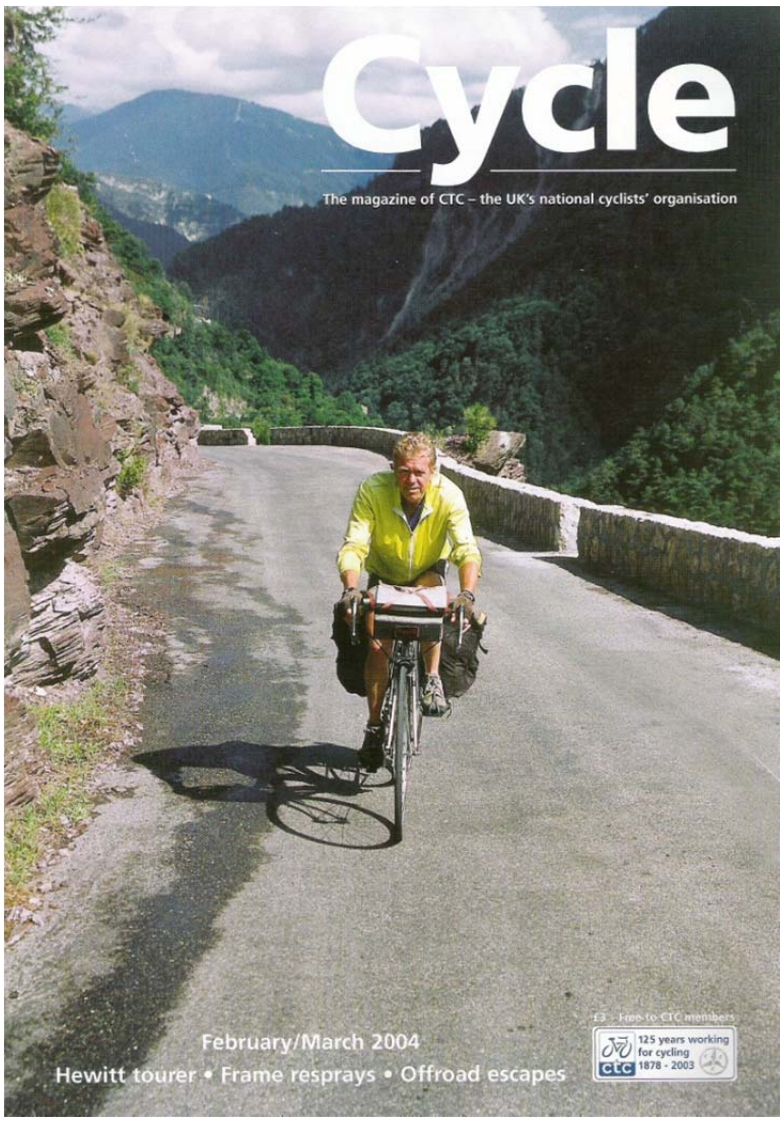
The language here is reminiscent of Fraser's turn of the century description of the unfamiliar dress and behaviour of those seen on his world tour. Also, alongside the voyeuristic activity of the cyclist we should also note the construction of a very specific rurality. The 'countryside' as an antithesis and a remedy for contemporary urban life is visibly and explicitly created.

The depth of Patterson's influence is clear in the way in which his visual language of composition has shaped the conventions of formal representation in subsequent cycle photography. Magazine covers are structured as if in a Patterson sketch.



More recent touring accounts continue to provide stress on the novel and the unfamiliar, but given conditions of globalisation and the rise of overseas tourism there are now far more frequent descriptions of 'exotic' travel, made possible through commercial aviation. Random issues of *Cycle* (the successor to the *CTC Gazette* and *Cycletouring*) in 2003/2004, describe tours in Kenya, Spain, France and India, with only one article in three issues on touring in the UK, and this themed around using a folding bicycle to explore the steam heritage railways of Wales (*Cycle* issues for Dec 2003, Feb 2004, August 2004). These are amateur traveller's accounts and once more the structure of the narrative revolves around difference and otherness. But these also reflect the growing commercial power of cycle tourism and the editorial decision of *Cycle* to embrace a different readership and CTC membership. The self-reported writings of cyclotourists continue in the pages of *Arrivée*, frequently picking up the themes of almost a century earlier. The cyclist is immediately present in the landscape, looking and seeing. Voyeurism is one appropriate lens through which to understand the experience of the cyclotourist.

In his analysis of the social aspects of cycling in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century, Norcliffe (2001) argues that the *fin de siècle* cyclist can be regarded as flâneur, both observer and observed, onlooker and displayer of the trappings of modernity, urban and urbane. Leaving aside Oddy's (2007) historical criticism of the exact period in which it is proper to describe the urban cyclist in this manner, we can still endorse the particularity of the role.

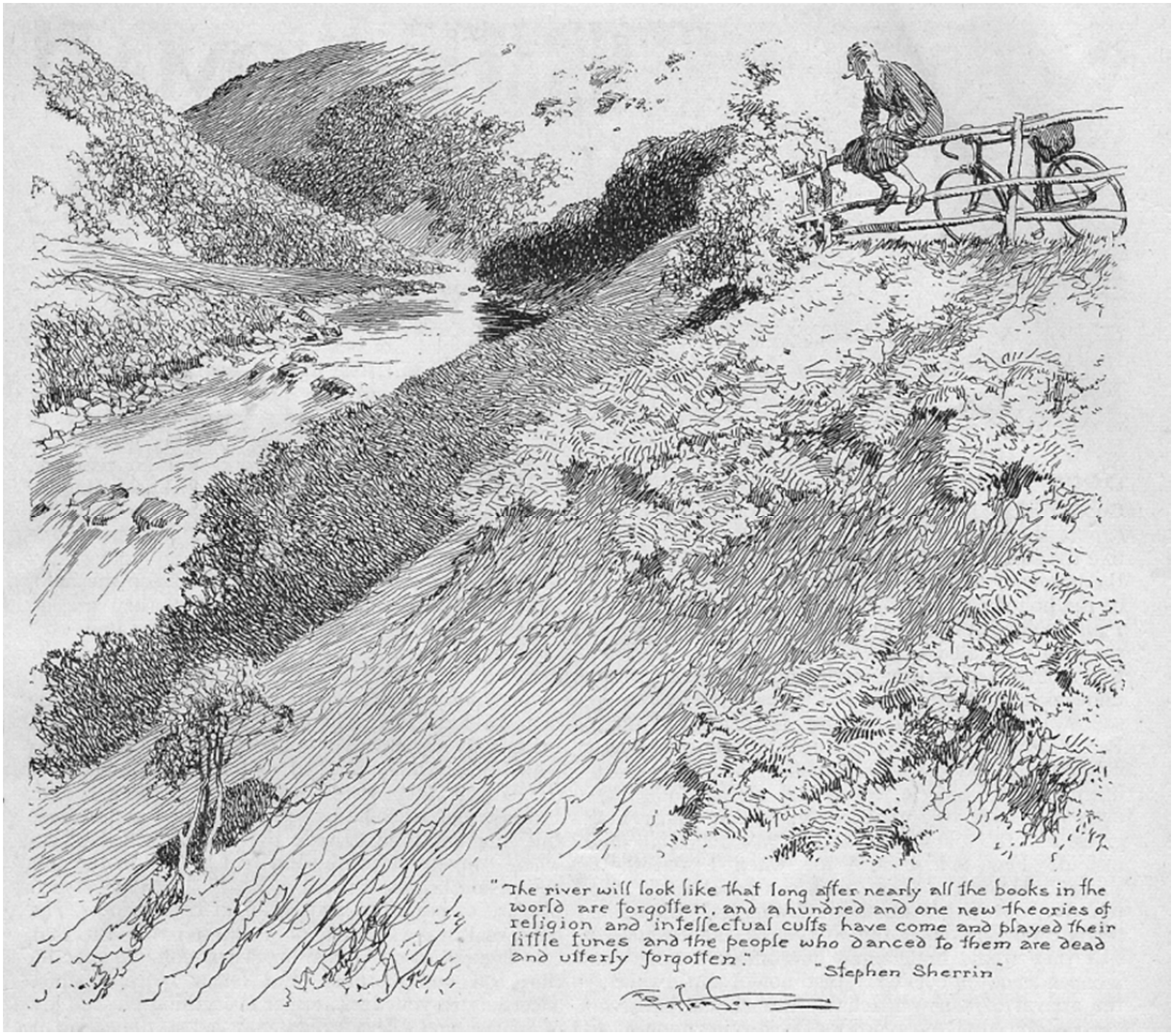


This imaging is supported by Urry's own discussion of the flâneur as "forerunner of the twentieth century tourist" (2002: 127) and of the gaze of the photographer (as described by Sontag 1979 cited in Urry 2002). He makes the point that in the democratisation of the gaze of photographer-tourist, "as everyone becomes a photographer, so everyone becomes an amateur semiotician". The views in tourist photographs become signifiers. Cyclotourism photography references the formal conventions of Patterson's landscape sketching

Similarly, the accounts of cyclotourists also progressively engage in signification the rough the twentieth century. Patterson's drawings of the idealised cyclotourist landscape are increasingly devoid of reality whilst maintaining their popularity through much of the century because of their ability to connect with a mythicised landscape: fictional, but not entirely devoid of resonance. Full of signifiers they connect with the desire of the mid-twentieth century cyclotourist in the way that exoticised pictures of challenging landscapes articulate and nurture the dreams and desire of the contemporary cycle tourist (see e.g. cover of Cycle Feb/March 2004).

The cyclotourist gaze, therefore, as constructed in the pages of the Cyclists' Touring Club, (now CTC), is almost institutionalised around an idealised, romanticised gaze. But where once s/he may have been an expression of modernity, the contemporary cyclist is – to the non-cyclist – anachronistic. Where the villagers of Staithes are rendered as quaint maintainers of tradition, so now the cyclotourist, using the bicycle in place of (not in addition to) the car, becomes him/herself a symbol of tradition.

To describe the cyclist as a voyeur is to accurately reflect the (re)production of the tourist gaze by the rider. But, simultaneously, the language of voyeurism, and even to an extent of flâneurie, limits our focus to the one making the observation. It is to consider the gaze only as a one-way imaging. In addition, we need to ask 'What is the role of the one who watches?'.



The construction of the tourist gaze occurs in relationship to its opposite: the non-tourist experience, according to Urry (2002: 1ff). The accounts studied, whilst recognising the possibility of other forms of access to the same visual spectacles, seem insistent that there

is something qualitatively different about the cyclotourist's experience of the landscape that marks him/her as somehow different from other forms of tourist.

"I think that to some extent this notion of freedom. This inherent urge to seek the untrammelled places where convention ceases and real beauty in thought and vision begins is in all of us but is undeveloped because of our close and confined civilisation. The only real way I know of shaking free from that confinement is cycle touring, when you step out on the road one morning, and for a space of time, according to your luck, forget everything but the joy of journeying. The walker may get a glimpse of it until he needs the 'bus to complete his travel for the day, but the cyclist wants not even that help… (Urry 1938 118)

In parallel with the voyeuristic and the romantic gaze, the cyclotourist accounts commonly describe a further dimension to the interaction of the cyclist and their surroundings. Implicit in these accounts studied is a sense that the cyclist, although inevitably a stranger and 'other', is somehow intrinsically more in tune with the landscape than those who reach the same vistas through other modes of transport. This distinction becomes even clearer when we move forward to examine those accounts which occur after the growth of mass motoring. In the UK, mass motoring is a product of the late 1960s, the point at which 50% of households are measured as having access to a car occurring in 1969. Although complicated considerably by class and gender bias in the distribution of motorisation, after this date, we can reasonably consider the non-car mobile as a minority.

The continuation, indeed the flourishing of cyclotourism in recent years, marks another social and cultural transition. Riding a bicycle as a deliberate leisure pursuit, especially in a context where general cycle use declines rapidly through the 1970s, marks the cyclotourist in popular terms as an eccentric. Published accounts of epic a (and not so epic) journeys by authors such as Mustoe (1992) and Dew (1993) serve to emphasise the oddness of the cyclist.

In all these accounts, the romantic gaze of the cyclotourist also hints at more than qa totally detached and ambivalent observer status. There is a frequently expressed difference which is best described through the consideration of agency. The landscape and the view within its own unique context is itself implicitly somehow agentic, affecting and acting upon the perceptions of the observer. Thus, in considering the location of agency in the process of experiential formation, it is quite clearly decentred. To unlock the processes through which this may be understood we need to move forward to the kinaesthetic dimension of the cyclotourist experience.

Kinaesthetics

To concentrate only on the gaze, and to note its almost formal romanticism, is to ignore the second and perhaps even more important dimension of the process of cyclotourism. Cycling is a kinaesthetic act (Spinney 2006). It is an embodied process, not the disembodied gaze of the photographer. And by definition it cannot be other than a physical act, whose degree of physicality is directly correlated to the geography of the landscape.

Cyclotourism can be a self-contained exercise (as described by Frank Urry, above) only because of the employment of the body in repetitive muscular exertion. The vistas opened up visually are an outcome of bodily movement of the cyclist in conjunction with the machine. This relation to physical action is, of course, also true of the walker, but the cyclist has the greater opportunity of access through the distances covered which are unavailable to the unaided pedestrian and the presence of the human powered machine brings a further almost cyborg component of complexity.

Spinney (2007: 25) explores ‘what makes peoples’ movement meaningful to them?’ as the central question of his research. By moving beyond the purely visual representation of the gaze he alerts us to the way in which, in his study, urban commuter cycling is experienced not only through the visual aesthetics of the surroundings but also through bodily interaction. This is mediated by terrain, topography, surface texture, wind, sun rain and other weather patterns, humidity. The limitation of the language of experience to the visual, is for Spinney, a considerable problem in grasping the reality of contemporary mobility.

The language of bodily experience is generally underdeveloped when compared with that available for description of the visual. Cyclists often refer to ‘body english’ as the language of competent riding, in order to convey the verbally unexplainable but experientially learned techniques required for cornering, for example (Ballantine 2008 personal communication).

This shared language is the basis of collective identity and recognition, the description of which is to be found – even if somewhat romanticised - even in the earliest accounts:

“that free and sympathetic companionship which exists among wheelmen. It is a wholly unique fellowship, depending for its existence upon no artificial interests. There is no extraordinary handshake, no mystic ritual of questions and answers, no cabalistic signs, by which members of this fraternity are recognized. The only condition of admission is the ability to ride a bicycle; the only requirement, enjoyment of the sport. This is the common ground upon which wheelmen meet. When one meets another he knows and feels that there is something in common,—that he is making the acquaintance of a man who takes pleasure in healthy, invigorating exercise, and delights in glorious out-of-door life.” (Phillips 1884: 246)

The centrality of kinaesthetics alongside visual aesthetics cannot be underestimated. Indeed the production of the gaze of the cyclist is in integral part of a wider kinaesthetic experience. Each of the touring accounts cited above also describes in detail the riding experience and its changing course, for example “[o]ut from the warm ingle we wept further southward, with her and there a flick of sunshine and always in our ears the roar of the wind” (Urry 1938: 21) or, from an earlier era, “There being no wind we were able to ride up the mountains for the first twelve miles without any great fatigue; but after this distance had been wheeled, dismounting and mounting at very short intervals became the order of the day” (Owen 1883: 82). Elsewhere, the same author (Owen 1883: 87): “The remainder of the distance at times required pedalling, but not severe, exhaustive work, by any means.” More

The relative ease or difficulty of each section of a ride is reflected in verbal description, not only of the ascent or descent, but of the corresponding bodily exertion, and the feeling of tiredness or refreshment that accompanies such activity.

“Marvellous views of mountains meeting the sea in cliffs, bays and island which disappeared in the blue haze as we battled over headlands into what must have been a force six headwind … the following day we turned our backs to the wind … paused at the crest of the one in eight climb to regain our breath and also to admire the superb view westward” (Moss 1979).

There is an interrelationship between the multiple elements at play. Wind can affect the experience of climbing, road surface quality and texture may change the pleasure provided by a descent.

“…my mood blackened further when the road turned right to face what looked like a wall. The climb is… totally exposed. Into a headwind it was a pig and became something to take my anger out on. … only the knowledge that there were no more climbs after this one kept me from walking. On the summit the ever-present curlews circled whilst the clear orange sky to the north outlined the hills we had just traversed.” (Nelson and Parrotte 2006: 21)

Experience, material culture and the bicycle

The importance of the kinaesthetic dimension is that for the cyclotourist, experience is never limited to the purely visual. Nor can its memory be adequately captured in a solely visual or photographic form. Memory is written instead into the body itself, expressed in muscle memory and physical memory alongside the visual. Body shape is altered by prolonged activity and, at its extreme, memory may be inscribed on the body through injury or in scar tissue. The relationship of artefacts to the memory is, perhaps more clearly than in other

cases, one of connection through a set of signifiers, of secondary connections to the experience itself.

Recent studies in material culture have explored the way in which artefacts are employed in order to frame, to recount and to express experience. They are the means by which personal; and collective histories are re-created and retold.

The arrangements of household objects, of souvenirs as mementoes and *objêts de memoir*, create the stuff of material culture and enable a reading of life experience. At most extreme the material culture of trench art, for example embodies the experience of the soldier or civilian in a conflict zone, expressed through the modification and transformation of the materiel of warfare (Saunders 2003).

For the cyclist, however, the bicycle, takes on a slightly different role. It may act in the conventional manner to be a way to re-member experience of travel, just as a postcard, an old menu or a book of matches serves as an object present in the experienced event and then removed and transcribed to a contemporary domestic location. However, the kinaesthetic dimension of cyclotourism opens up a qualitatively different relation to experience.

As the means of locomotion, the bicycle is the tool by which, and through which, the experience of travel is made available and is realised. Thus the cycle becomes, for the cyclotourist, the means through which experience is inscribed on the body of the rider. In addition to the agentic effect of the landscape, the bicycle also becomes an agent of experience. It is the medium through which the action of the rider is transferred into motion. The qualities of particular bicycles their comfort, gearing, reliability act to form the particularity of the riding experience. So the bicycle itself can be seen to have agency in the creation of experience, or at least be the medium through which it is transmitted. In the words of Phillips (1883: 249) again: “Ah, wheelmen only know this strange community between the steel steed and the manly heart!”.

Memory is not simply confined to the dominant visual and aural senses supplemented by smell, taste and touch. There is also the muscle memory, the experience and memory of fatigue, of emotion – fear and elation - made possible through the necessarily embodied process of bicycle riding. These intensely private experiences are also collectively known by other cyclists. The ‘fellowship of the wheel’ espoused as a code of conduct by *Cycling* and in the *CTC Gazette* relates to more than a code of behaviour. The shared knowledge of ‘body English’ and the experiential knowledges common to cyclotourists by virtue of their activity

allow for the creation of community identities and of empathic communication by virtue of shared experience.

Domestication

One consequence of this complex construction of experience in which the ‘otherness’ of the landscape becomes itself agentic in the formalisation of memory is that the ‘other becomes to a significant extent, domesticated. A process of self-discovery is intiated in which the landscape, however wild and difficult, is the means by which the sefl can be improved. In the internal conversation of audax riders, ‘scenic’ is used as a description for ‘very hilly, lots of climbing considerable degrees of fatiuge .For example a typical ‘scenic’ 200km tour (to be undertaken in one day with minimum and maximum speeds set) may involve 2500-4000m of climbing. Landscape is reduced to a challenge. Gone is the awe of the nineteenth century writer to be replaced by an introspection on the landscape as a means to challenge the body.

One may draw considerable parallels here with writing on mountains and mountaineering. Here too the late nineteenth century emergence of climbing as a leisure pastime was accompanied by the construction of numerous cable car and rail systems to provide access to mountain summits across Europe. Similarly road construction in mountain passes allowed greater accessibility of the cycle tourist. Even in the 1920s holidays to ride Alpine Passes were an established feature of CTC itineraries.

Much work remains to be done in providing comparative analysis of the production of landscape in different tourism and leisure pursuits. This paper begins to draw attention to some of the complexity of cyclists’ construction of landscape.